

U.N. cleaning house Leaders push for New World Order

While President Bush's "New World Order" usually can be found only in the satire of a comedian's punch line or a cartoonist's cynicism, his rhetoric seems to have caught on in the halls of the United Nations.

World leaders met Friday in New York for the first Security Council summit. The idea was to set a new mission for the nearly 50-year-old body — to abandon the non-interventionist stance in favor of global protection of human rights.

The new secretary-general of the United Nations, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, has said international communities had become too interdependent and borders too porous for nations to harbor isolationist attitudes.



Brian Shellito/DN

In line with this philosophy, French President Francois Mitterrand suggested a new U.N. rapid deployment force. Such a standing army would not be the size of the multinational Desert Storm deployment. Instead, it would be more like the force deployed in southern Turkey, which created a pocket of protection for Kurdish refugees.

If this new plan takes off, it would mean an about-face from the old United Nations.

In fact, an international police force probably would be difficult to oversee, full of conflicting ideas between heads of state. One example of such discord is the strong challenge to the new idea from the Chinese Premier Li Peng, who undoubtedly remembers Tiananmen Square and wonders whether such a force might have been used against him.

The possibility of permanent Security Council members using the rapid deployment force for their own interests also would exist. Certainly, many national egos and self-interests would have to be overcome.

Still, the benefits could be great if these hurdles could be jumped. Global communication and cooperation would replace Cold War-style foreign policy by larger neighbors.

The primary concern would be preventing the bloodshed of civil wars and human rights violations such as the brutal Tiananmen Square crackdown.

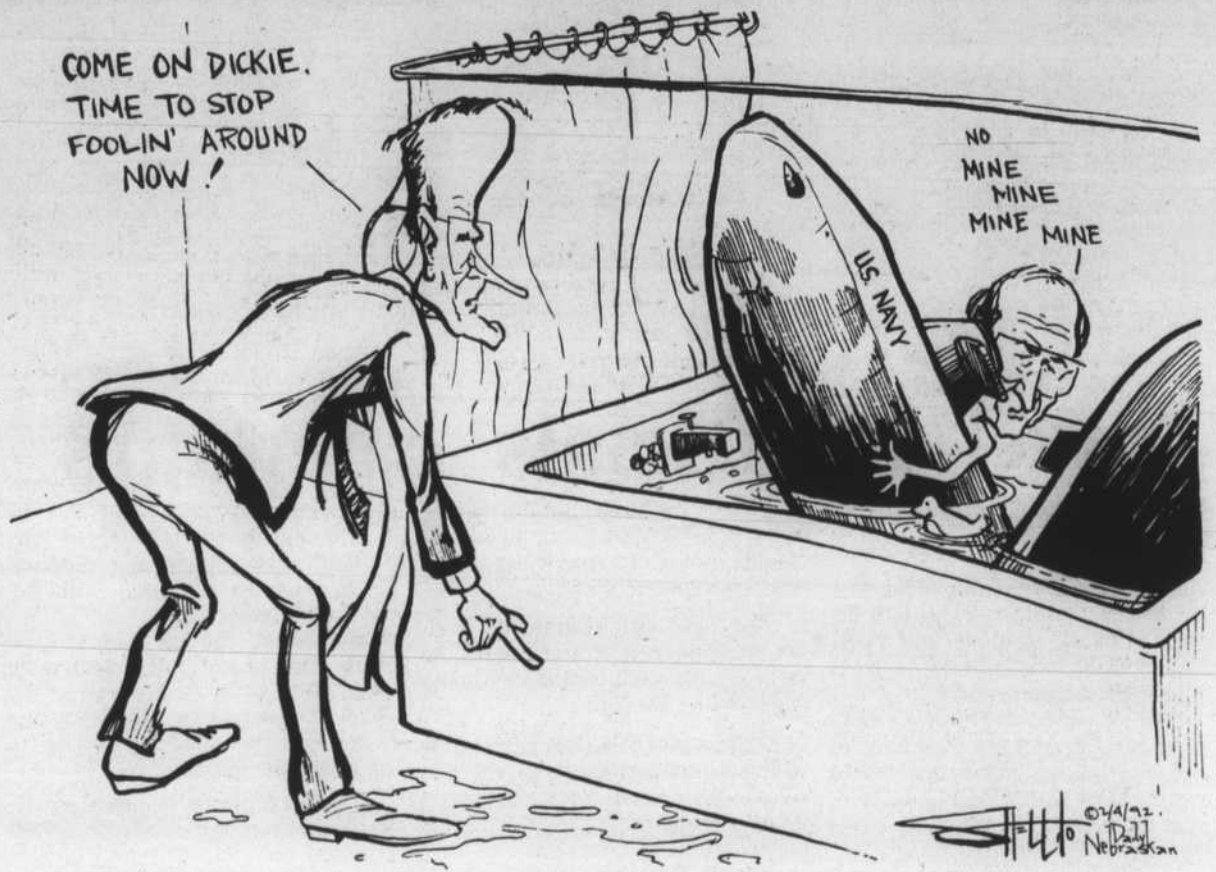
The more optimistic and visionary thinkers of our time believe that one day the world will have one currency, one army and one overriding body of lawmakers, possibly the "Government of Earth." Although these ideas may be hard to accept, developments such as the European Community are signs of the coming times.

No one in our generation, and probably no one in the next several generations, will see such unification. Too much fear and mistrust of other cultures can be found among people for such global cooperation to appear at this point.

But it is possible that the seeds could have been planted at last weekend's meeting of world leaders.

It may be pure fantasy to believe that the Gulf War speechcraft of President Bush could translate into an international mood for an end to isolationism. But, after all, in another popular fantasy we have a United Federation of Planets.

As Captain Jean-Luc Picard would say, "Engage."



BRIAN ALLEN

Gun waiting period a mistake

On March 5, Wisconsin resident Bonnie Elmasri tried to buy a gun to protect her children from her estranged husband, who repeatedly had threatened their lives. She was not allowed to buy a gun because of a Wisconsin law that requires a two-day waiting period. A day later her estranged husband killed Elmasri and both of her children.

I am shocked and outraged that this woman was not offered even the possibility of a timely self-defense for herself and her children. Every decent human being should have that option.

If not for the idiocy of the Wisconsin state Legislature and the governor who allowed this law to pass, a young woman and her two children might be alive today. For their violent deaths, I hold responsible not only the actual killer but also those who contributed to the carnage by denying Elmasri means of protection.

I only hope that in the future, I will not also hold responsible the senators and governor of our fine, if somewhat misguided, state. Believe it or not, Nebraska recently has fallen to the same sort of stupidity that has plagued states like Wisconsin.

The Nebraska Legislature, in its infinite wisdom, recently passed what amounts to a two-day handgun waiting period.

The Nebraska version of the law is somewhat more sensible than many others, in that it applies only to handguns, and for the most part, only to first-time gun purchasers. Under the Nebraska system, anyone who wishes to purchase a handgun must present the firearms dealer with a state-issued "handgun" card. No card, no gun. Period.

To obtain this card, a Nebraskan must register at a local law enforcement agency, pay what is now a nominal fee (this could change in the future) and wait for a card that may be available in two days.

Handguns can be purchased by showing the card, as long as it is kept current. While this eliminates much of the inconvenience for frequent gun buyers, it still leaves first-time gun purchasers defenseless for two days. And if a person is in genuine fear for his or her life, as was Elmasri, two days is a very, very long time.

This is America, Land of the Free — but that appears to be changing.

Here people are supposed to be innocent until proven guilty. Evidently, most legislators in Nebraska and Wisconsin don't believe in this ideal.

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I put more faith in the beliefs and principles of our founding fathers than I do in the misguided attempts of modern, self-proclaimed "protectors of the people" to save us from ourselves. I don't need gun laws to protect me, I only need the means to protect myself.

Anyone who thinks waiting periods will save lives must realize that criminals rarely obtain weapons by legitimate means. They steal them or buy them illegally.

A criminal probably will not walk into a legal gun store and buy a firearm to use in committing a crime. Guns are available on the black market, and they always will be. Illegal drugs flow into this country by the ton, and weapons could as well.

Imposing laws on legal gun dealers and buyers will have no effect on criminals. By definition, criminals don't obey laws.

Waiting periods also are supposed to control "crimes of passion," crimes committed by someone in the heat of anger. I hope no one intelligent enough to get into this university believes

that. Someone angry enough to drive to a gun store, buy a gun and ammunition, then drive back and kill someone will be angry enough to either wait the two, seven or 10 days and kill anyway, or, if denied a gun, buy a hunting bow, crossbow, knife, garrote, hammer, pipe wrench or the like to finish the job anyway.

Some proponents argue that waiting periods prevent suicide by giving people time to contemplate the consequences of their actions. But people despondent enough to buy guns and kill themselves, if denied a gun, would just head into an oak tree at 90 miles an hour halfway home.

Are we prepared to place a waiting period on razor blades, sleeping pills or motor vehicles? I think not. Why then, on firearms?

Other proponents argue that people don't need self-protection because police protection is adequate.

Here at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, police protection probably is adequate. That's a good thing, too, because UNL Housing, which doesn't allow firearms inside residence halls, definitely doesn't support Second Amendment rights.

I worked as a security officer in the residence halls for a while. I know that the emergency response time of the UNL Police night shift is pretty phenomenal and the Lincoln Police Department's response time isn't bad. But those who live in other parts of the state are not so lucky.

The Omaha World-Herald recently reported that the average emergency response time in south Omaha on weekend nights was 17 minutes. If someone is being raped, beaten or killed, 17 minutes probably will be just a little too late. And in rural Nebraska, it may take the county sheriff a half-hour to drive to a crime scene.

It is criminal to deny anyone self-protection for any period of time, no matter how short. Waiting periods cause inconvenience only to legitimate gun buyers and punish only those in need of protection.

Most Nebraskans think they will never need a gun for self-protection, and I sincerely hope they are right.

But because we live in a state with a waiting period, those who think they don't need guns should buy them now. By the time they realize they may need one after all, it might be too late.

Just ask the relatives of Bonnie Elmasri.

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EDITORIAL POLICY

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